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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
January 18, 1944

SPECIAL COMMODITIES BRANCH MEMORANDUM NO. 38

To: All Divisions and Sections, Special Commodities Branch
From: H. C. Albin, Chief, Special Commodities Branch
Subject: Press Relationships

The function of issuing news releases and giving interviews to the Press and other public information services on operations of this Administration is the responsibility of the Marketing Reports Division. Situations arise, however, wherein it is desirable for certain of the personnel of this Branch to grant such interviews -- subject to the conditions outlined herein.

For practical purposes, there is no distinction between the disclosure of information to press reporters and to other members of the public, except that the reporter publishes the fact to thousands and the citizen or businessman publishes it among his friends and associates. Therefore, observance of the following standards -- designed to insure accuracy, reliability, and equitable treatment of news as a safeguard to the Government, to the Press, and to the public -- applies in all cases.

All offices are urged to keep an open door to reporters of press and radio. The Press is perhaps the most important link between this organization and the public it serves and it should not be necessary to stress the necessity for maintaining a good relationship.

In general, good judgment is the best criterion for determining what information should be withheld. The following types of information should not be given out under any circumstances:

1. Information affecting national security.
2. Premature disclosure of pending decisions or determinations of policy.
3. Factual information or prediction, which has not been made public in any form or which represents the personal -- and unofficial -- knowledge or opinion of the official interviewed.
4. Purely speculative or opinionative statements.

5. Interpretations or observations on matters not wholly within the jurisdiction of the officer interviewed.
6. "Off-the-record" statements of any kind.
7. Information which would be material value or advantage to one person, if not made known to others.
8. Any statement or disclosure which the person interviewed would not care to have attributed to him by name.

The only purpose of these restrictions on divulgence of information is to safeguard public interest.

In every instance where a representative of this Branch gives an interview to the Press, it shall be in the presence of the Chief, or another person authorized to act for the Chief of his Division. Not later than the day immediately following the interview, the person interviewed shall prepare a memorandum to the Chief, Marketing Reports Division, for my signature, which will contain a brief summary of the interview and include all of the items discussed. A copy of the memorandum shall be furnished for my office.



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